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7 January 1956

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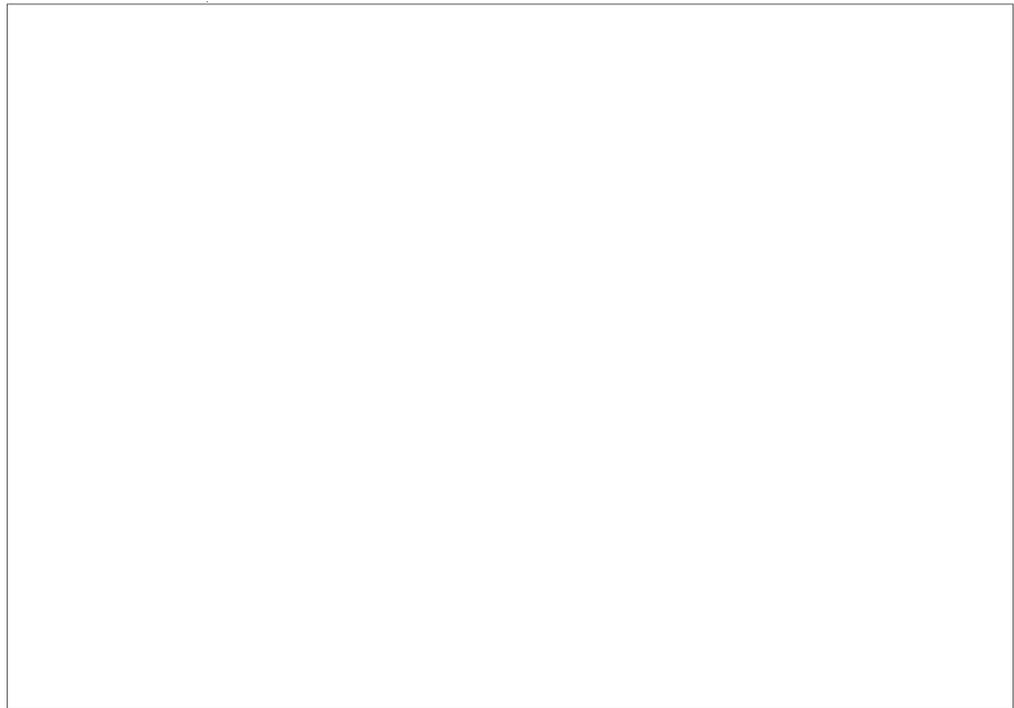
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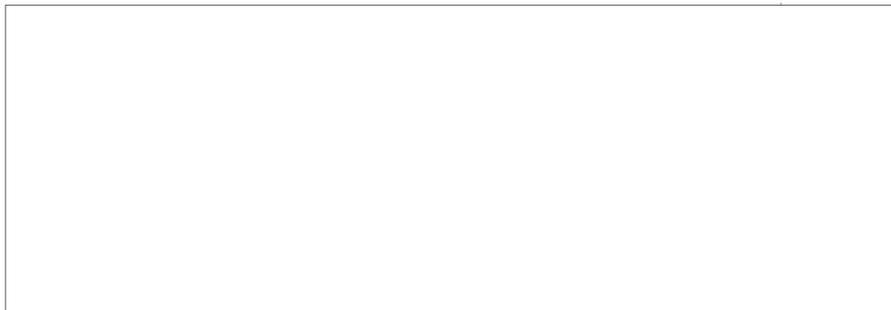
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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION

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1. CYPRUS TALKS TO BE RESUMED

[REDACTED] Greek foreign minister Theotokis says Archbishop Makarios and Governor Harding have agreed to resume talks on the Cyprus question, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Theotokis says Harding has agreed to "free discussions," but the foreign minister is not optimistic, since he doubts Britain's readiness to make an acceptable settlement.

[REDACTED] Harding has reported from Cyprus that the security situation will not permit prolonged discussions. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Comment

Despite Theotokis' understanding that there will be "free discussions," they are likely to be based on the British formula and will probably break up over its implicit recognition of Turkey's interest in the future status of Cyprus. Turkey remains adamant in its opposition to any concession toward self-determination. Ankara has recently repeated its demand that any British plan for self-government provide equal representation for the island's Greek and Turkish communities.

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2. REMOVAL OF SYRIAN CHIEF OF STAFF REPORTED IMMINENT

[REDACTED] Syrian chief of staff Shuqayr will be removed shortly, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Dissatisfaction within the officer ranks is making his position untenable and there is danger that he may be assassinated.

The embassy comments that Shuqayr's future would appear to depend on whether and how strongly conservative elements in Syria rally to his support. It feels that his dismissal would remove the last real obstacle to the assumption of full control over the army by anti-Western elements and might lead to leftist control over the government.

Comment Shuqayr has previously exhibited considerable political agility and has long maneuvered successfully between the various conflicting elements struggling for control in Syria. [REDACTED] conservative elements in Syria, with Iraqi support, may be preparing for a showdown.

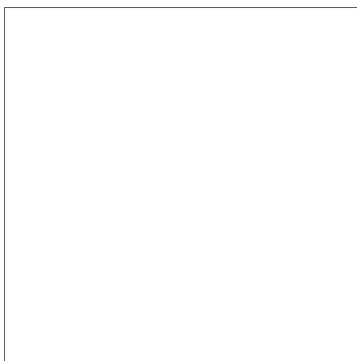
Shuqayr has been under increasing pressure to obtain arms from the Soviet bloc and to avoid any agreement with the West. Syrian humiliation over the Israeli raid at Tiberias is apparently being used against Shuqayr as a means of obtaining either his removal or his compliance with leftist demands.

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3. NEW CRISIS THREATENS IN JORDAN

Comment on:



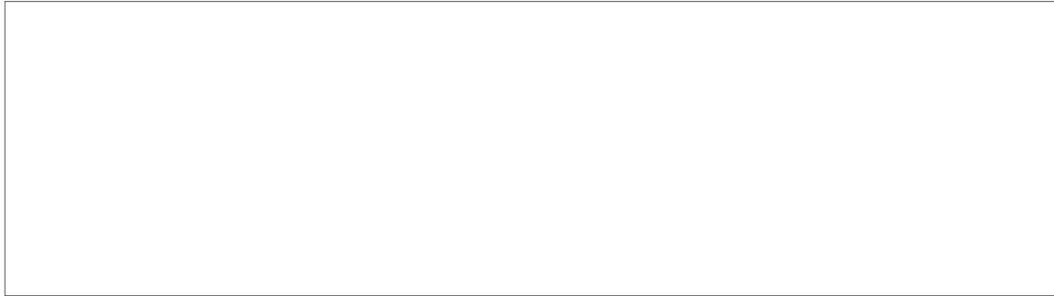
The 4 January supreme court decision that King Hussain's 19 December dissolution of the Jordan parliament was illegal has infuriated Jordanian elements hostile to the Baghdad pact, which had hoped to dominate a newly elected parliament. The consulate general in Jerusalem expects renewed rioting.

The governmental problem remains unresolved, with rumors that the caretaker cabinet may resign. The authority and prestige of the throne have declined and the British position has been severely damaged. Egypt's prestige has risen sharply and it is unlikely that any Jordanian decisions in the near future involving Israel or Middle East problems will be taken without the approval of Cairo.

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4. VIET MINH PROPOSES TRADE RELATIONS WITH EGYPT



Comment

Earlier reports have suggested Viet Minh efforts to establish diplomatic relations with Egypt. This proposal is in keeping with the continuing Viet Minh and Orbit campaign to gain political influence among neutralist Afro-Asian powers by the extension of economic relations.

The Viet Minh needs cotton to restore its textile industry to full production. A substantial amount of the cotton utilized by the industry in North Vietnam prior to the Communist takeover was supplied under American aid programs. (Prepared jointly with ORR)

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION
(Information as of 1700, 6 January)

There was brief exchange of fire between Egyptian and Israeli patrols in the El Auja region on 6 January and Israel claims that Egyptian forces also ambushed an Israeli weapons carrier in this area. According to an Israeli spokesman, two Egyptian jets violated the Israeli airspace over Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba on 5 January. (Press)

_____ Syria would not sign a reimbursable military aid agreement with the United States. Syria considers the prices for the military items under consideration exorbitant and believes the items are available elsewhere at much lower prices. While the Syrians may merely be attempting to bargain, _____

_____ Syria may be about to finalize an arms contract with Czechoslovakia. _____

Three Soviet freighters arrived at the Egyptian port of Alexandria from Soviet Black Sea ports between 1 and 5 January and have reportedly been unloading military equipment in a heavily guarded security area. Two of them are the Smela and the Admiral Ushakov. Both previously delivered arms cargoes to Alexandria. The third is probably the Sukhona, which passed Istanbul on 2 January. All three declared a cargo of machinery for Albania. _____

The Egyptian naval training vessel Mharussa reportedly left Alexandria on 26 December 1955 carrying 360 officers of the Egyptian army, navy and air force. The officers are allegedly on their way to Eastern Europe, where they will undergo specific periods of training--six months, one year, and two years--in their specialties. This report is unconfirmed, but other evidence indicates that some Egyptian pilots have already received training in Czechoslovakia and that plans have also been made for the training of Egyptian army and navy personnel in Eastern Europe. _____